

Coccidioidomycosis Upsurge

The Public Health Department would like the medical community to be aware of an increase in reported coccidioidomycosis (Valley fever) cases over the past couple of months in San Luis Obispo County. Northern regions of the county have seen the bulk of cases. “Cocci” is an infection caused by a fungus, *Coccidioides immitis*, which is endemic to SLO County. Exposure to dust and soil increases the risk for infection.

The CDC defines a clinical case as an illness characterized by one or more of the following:

- Influenza-like signs and symptoms
- Pneumonia or other pulmonary lesion, diagnosed by chest radiograph
- Erythema nodosum or erythema multiforme rash
- Involvement of bones, joints, or skin by dissemination
- Meningitis
- Involvement of viscera and lymph nodes

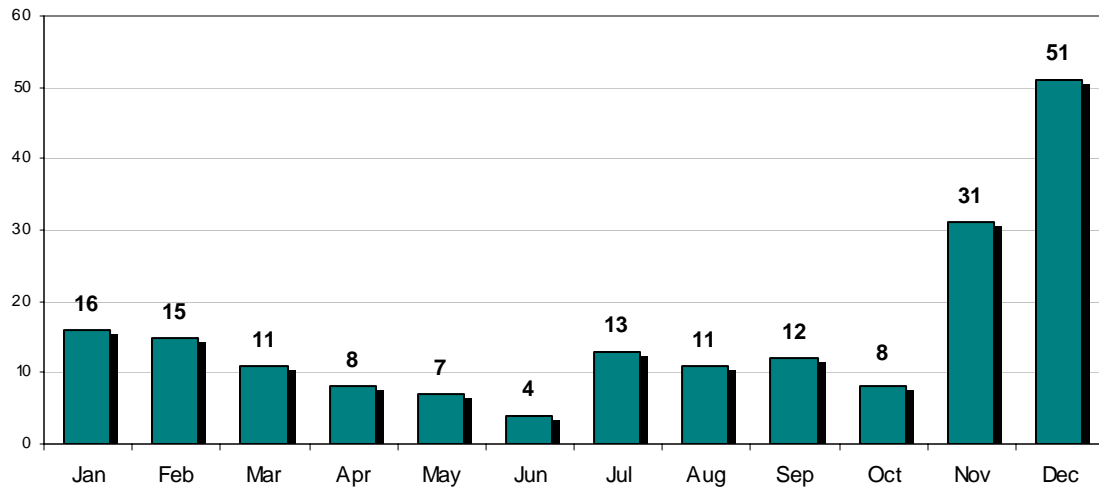
Laboratory criteria for diagnosis includes:

- Cultural, histopathologic, or molecular evidence of presence of *C. immitis*, or
- Positive serologic test for coccidioidal antibodies in serum or cerebrospinal fluid by:
 1. Detection of coccidioidal IgM by immunodiffusion, EIA, latex agglutination, or tube precipitin, or
 2. Detection of rising titer of coccidioidal IgG by immunodiffusion, EIA, or complement fixation.

The early manifestations of “cocci” are similar to those of other causes of community-acquired pneumonia (CAP). A study by Valdivia (2006) showed that in a “cocci” endemic region in Arizona, 29% of patients with recent onset of a lower respiratory tract syndrome were serologically confirmed for “cocci.” It was also noted in the study that symptomatic differences in patients had insufficient predictive value to guide clinicians without specific laboratory tests. “Cocci” is a common cause of CAP after exposure in a disease-endemic region. When evaluating patients with community acquired pneumonias, please consider “cocci” as a differential diagnosis.

There have already been over 90 cases reported since October 2006 compared to 113 cases for the whole year in 2005 (see Figure 1 for number of cases by month in 2006). There is a statistically significant increase in cases and we expect to see even more. Coccidioidomycosis is a reportable condition (California Code of Regulations, CCR 2500) and must be reported to the Public Health Department by faxing a Confidential Morbidity Report to 781-5543. If you have any further questions, please contact the SLO County Public Health Dept. at (805) 781-5500.

Figure 1. Number of Reported "Cocci" Cases by Month in SLO County, 2006



** 11 cases have already been reported for the month of January, as of 1/5/07.*